

Listing of the Claims

Claims 1-13 (Cancelled)

Claim 14 (Currently Amended) A method, according to claim 16 ~~13~~, wherein:

said step of forming said laminate for magnetic data recording is at least one method selected from the group consisting of sputtering, ion plating, plasma CVD, and vacuum deposition.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented) A method, according to claim 14, wherein:

said step of forming said protective layer is a method selected from the group consisting of sputtering, ion plating, plasma CVD, and vacuum deposition.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a thin-film magnetic
recording medium, comprising the steps of, ~~according to claim 13, wherein:~~

forming a laminate for magnetic data recording on a nonmagnetic substrate;

said step of forming being a dry process in a vacuum atmosphere;

forming a protective layer on said laminate;

said step of forming a protective layer being a dry process in a vacuum atmosphere;

plasma-etching a first surface of said protective layer;

conducting the steps of forming a laminate, forming a protective layer, and plasma-etching
continuously; and

forming a lubricant layer on said first surface of said protective layer, whereby surface defects are minimized and surface quality is greatly improved.

Claim 17 (Cancelled)

Claim 18 (Original) A method according to claim 15 wherein:

said step of plasma-etching is conducted in a process gas mixture contain the process gas mixture of Ar, O₂, and N₂ where the mixing ratio thereof is substantially 6: 1: 3.

Claims 19-20 (Cancelled)